

Cedar Mountains Wilderness FAQs

1. What is it? The Cedar Mountains Wilderness was officially designated by Congress in late 2005 and is the newest wilderness area to be designated in Utah in over 20 years. It encompasses approximately 100,000 acres of public land 50 miles due west of Salt Lake City, just south of Interstate 80. If you have ever driven to Wendover, you have past right by the Cedar Mountains. This arid desert mountain range forms the western boundary of Skull Valley and got its name from the area's juniper trees which were referred to in the past as cedars. Topography consists of rolling benches covered in salt desert shrubs and grasses that rise through dry, rugged canyons to steep slopes with scattered juniper stands. Maximum elevation is 7700 feet at Cedar Peak. The wilderness area is long and narrow, running north to south for 32 miles along the length of the Cedar Mountains with a maximum width of only 7 miles. For more details, see the attached Cedar Mountains Wilderness Area provisional map.

2. What is the purpose of wilderness? Wilderness areas are designed to provide an environment for primitive and unconfined recreation where natural processes predominate and man is only a visitor.

3. Are some activities restricted in wilderness? The following is a list of prohibited acts inside the wilderness area:

- Use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment, or other forms of mechanical transport. Mechanical transport means any vehicle, device, or contrivance for moving people or material that has moving parts. This includes, but is not limited to, bicycles, hang gliders, parachutes, game carriers, carts, or wagons. Wheelchairs, pack stock, skis, and snowshoes are allowable. Prohibited motorized equipment includes, but is not limited to, chainsaws, power drills, and generators. The following small mechanical devices are not prohibited in wilderness: firearms, archery gear, shavers, wrist watches, clocks, flashlights, cameras, camping stoves, cellular phones, radios, GPS receivers, or other similar hand held or portable equipment.
- Operating a commercial enterprise without a permit from the BLM. Commercial permits will only be granted to activities that are necessary for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the area.
- Engage or participate in competitive activities
- Land aircraft
- Build structures
- Cut trees or other vegetation

For a more comprehensive understanding, visitors can familiarize themselves with the federal Wilderness Act of 1964 or visit the website of the Wilderness Information Network website at <http://www.wilderness.net/>.

3. How do I get there? From Salt Lake City, freeway exits for the Cedar Mountains Wilderness can be reached by traveling west along I-80 for about 45 minutes.

Almost all of the Cedar Mountains Wilderness is bounded by secondary dirt roads maintained by county road crews. This makes for both well-defined boundaries to follow and excellent public access. **Beware: Roads near the Cedar Mountains get very slick and muddy and may become impassable during inclement weather.** Very dusty conditions can develop during extended dry periods. Four-wheel drive and high clearance vehicles are recommended in most areas.

East Side Access: If you wish to explore the east side of the Cedar Wilderness, take Exit 70 at Delle and drive west along the south-side frontage road past the gas station. Follow the frontage road 2 miles until it veers south onto a secondary dirt road which eventually forms the eastern boundary of wilderness area. After about 8 miles along this route, you reach the east side entrance to Hastings Pass which will take you to the west side of the range. Continuing south past the Hastings Pass road brings you to Redlum Spring, Henry Spring, Eightmile Spring, and eventually to the east side of Rydalch Pass. Continuing south of Rydalch Pass takes you along a rough 4 X 4 road to Cochran Spring and White Rocks. Beware of washouts in this area. Crossing over Rydalch brings you over to the southwest side of the wilderness area. You can then travel north along the west side boundary road back to I-80.

West Side Access: If you want to start on the west side of the Cedar Wilderness, take Exit 56 at Aragonite, drive south along a paved road that crosses a set of railroad tracks. Two (2) miles south of the tracks, turn left or east onto a gravel road and travel 1.75 miles to a bulletin board located at a road junction. Traveling straight east at this junction will take you over Hastings Pass to the east side. This is a good route to access the upper elevations of the wilderness. Turning right at the bulletin board will take you down the western boundary of the wilderness past Quincy Spring and Brown Spring, eventually entering Rydalch Pass which will take you back over to the eastern side of the range. From the east side of Rydalch, you can drive north along the east boundary road back to I-80, go south along the east boundary to White Rocks, or continue straight east across Skull Valley to Utah Highway 196.

4. Are there any road signs? Beyond paved roads, directional signs in the area are very limited. To encourage self-reliance and maintain the wilderness setting envisioned by Congress in the Wilderness Act, the BLM has not installed additional road signs at the Cedar Mountains. Travelers must rely on their own map reading abilities and navigational skills. Use of current maps, compass, and/or GPS is recommended. Maps are available at BLM offices, outdoor retailers, or on the Internet.

5. Where can I park my vehicle? Along the boundary of the Cedar Mountains Wilderness, you can park your vehicle off the roadside opposite from the wilderness area. If you wish to park along a road that has wilderness on both sides such as in Rydalch Pass, you may pull your vehicle over and park within 30 feet of the centerline of the road. See the attached Cedar Mountains Wilderness interim map for boundary details.

6. How is the boundary marked? In order to minimize visual disturbances to visitors, the boundary is marked with 4 inch wide brown fiber-glass posts with standard BLM wilderness decals. Frequency of this signing varies in places due to management needs, but in general, averages about one sign every 1.5 miles along the perimeter.

7. What recreation opportunities exist? All recreation is limited to primitive, non-motorized, non-mechanized activities within the boundaries of the wilderness area. Motorized or mechanized travel is still permitted along the boundaries of the wilderness. Here are a few details on some of the recreation opportunities in the Cedar Mountain Wilderness.

- **Camping:** You may camp by non-mechanized means anywhere within the wilderness. There are no designated campsites or permit requirements; however, you are limited to a 14-day stay within any 28-day period. Always remember to pack in and pack out everything you bring. Camper trailers or RVs are limited to areas where motor vehicles can park. See #10 below. Campfires are permitted when fire restrictions are not in effect. Check with the BLM Salt Lake Field Office, 801-977-4300 for the most recent information.
- **Hiking/Backpacking:** There are excellent opportunities for day hiking or extended backpacking. You are not limited to where you can go on foot, but you must find your own way in the wilderness. Currently, there are no designated trails or trailheads. Access to ridgelines, steep slopes, rolling benchlands, or rugged side canyons can be found along most boundary roads. Previously existing roads closed to motor vehicles are good routes for hikers to follow into the wilderness. Backpackers can spend multiple days following the spine of the Cedar Mountains or complete a traverse of the range after camping on top. Stunning views of the surrounding area are possible from upper elevations. Be prepared to carry all your water.
- **Horseback Riding:** Horses and other pack animals are permitted in the wilderness. Excellent opportunities for riding exist along the benches just off of the boundary roads on either side of the Cedar Mountains. Livestock water is available at grazing troughs in limited places along the benches. You should plan on hauling water for your animals. Weed-free feed or hay must be used at all times.
- **Hunting:** Hunting is permitted in wilderness and opportunities for harvesting deer, antelope, and upland game can be found in the Cedars. Be sure to check with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources for applicable hunting regulations, seasons, and license requirements. Use of firearms and/or archery equipment is permitted. Game carriers, carts, or wagons may not be used inside the wilderness boundary. Pack stock may be used for hunting purposes.
- **Target Shooting:** As with other public lands nearby, shooting is permitted, but you must follow certain guidelines. Do not shoot in an area where you may disturb or put other visitors in danger. Only use paper targets and pack everything out, including ALL spent cartridge or shell casings. Do not shoot at clay targets, metal, plastic, glass, paint cans, propane tanks, computers, appliances, batteries, or television sets in the wilderness area.
- **Mountain Biking:** Since it involves non-primitive mechanized travel, mountain biking is prohibited within wilderness. However, you may ride mountain bikes on

open vehicle routes along the boundary of the wilderness, including Hastings Pass and Rydalch Pass.

- **Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV):** OHV travel is permitted on open vehicle routes along the wilderness boundary. All motor vehicles are prohibited inside the wilderness area. These restrictions also apply to snowmobiles.
- **Geocaching:** Geocaches are considered non-natural, abandoned property that negatively impacts wilderness values and are prohibited inside the wilderness area.
- **Climbing:** Climbing opportunities exist at upper elevations and are permitted within the wilderness area. However, use of power drills and placing of bolts or other permanent climbing aids is prohibited.
- **Parasailing or Hang Gliding:** These activities are prohibited in the wilderness area because they are not considered primitive recreation.
- **Skiing or Snowshoeing:** These activities are permitted in wilderness. However, adequate snow cover is usually only found at upper elevations in winter, so opportunities are usually limited.
- **Rockhounding:** Hobby rock collecting which results in negligible surface disturbance is permitted and generally includes the collection of geochemical, rock, soil, or mineral specimens using hand tools, hand panning, or non-motorized sluicing. Use of metal detectors, gold spears, and other battery-operated devices for sensing the presence of minerals is not permitted. Digging prospect pits or trenches, use of mechanized earth-moving equipment, motorized vehicles, vehicle-mounted drilling equipment, mining exploration, or establishing new mining claims are prohibited.
- **Photography:** Personal photography or videos of recreation activities, natural scenery, plants, or wildlife is permissible and does not require a permit. For commercial filming or photography, refer to the next item below.

8. Can I use a wheelchair? If you have a disability that requires the use of a wheelchair, you may use a wheelchair in the wilderness. However, BLM is not required to facilitate such use by building any access facilities or modifying any conditions of lands within the wilderness area.

9. Do I need a permit for anything? You do not need a permit to access the wilderness area for casual visitation, private recreation, or backcountry travel. Activities that may require a BLM permit include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Commercial guiding
- Organized group events
- Scouting trips
- Commercial filming or photography (minimum impact only)

Contact the BLM Salt Lake Field Office at 801-977-4300 to find out more about permit requirements.

10. What kind of plants & wildlife might I see? The Cedar Mountain Wilderness Area is home to a diverse biological community including:

- Desert wildflowers and native grasses

- Juniper trees, sagebrush, and salt desert shrubs
- Eagles, hawks, owls, ravens, and many other bird species
- Chukar partridge, mourning dove
- Antelope, mule deer
- Rabbits, badgers, coyotes, fox, bobcat
- Snake & lizard species

11. Are there any wild horses there? Yes, part of the Cedar Mountain Herd Management Area is located in the wilderness. Wild horses have occupied the Cedar Mountains since the late 1800s. Most are descendants of animals that were turned loose or escaped from nearby ranches. Some may have come from remounts provided to the U.S. Army. There are approximately 250 head of wild horses that frequent the area, mainly in the south. There is a wide range of colors within the herd including bay, black, sorrel, red and blue roan, buckskin, gray, palomino, and pinto. The best viewing opportunities are available in the south on either the east or west side of Rydalc Pass. Most of the wild horses you will encounter in the Cedars are naturally wary of humans and will normally run when approach. Please do not try to get too close and disturb the animals. They are best photographed and viewed with binoculars from a distance. Chasing or otherwise harassing any wild horses on public land is strictly prohibited. Please report any violations of this regulation to the Salt Lake Field Office at 801-977-4300.

12. What's the weather like? As with most of the Utah west desert, annual daytime temperatures can vary from below freezing in winter to triple digits in summer. Average daytime temperatures are as follows:

- Early Spring and late Fall: 50s - 60s
- Late Spring and early Fall: 70s - 80s
- Summer: mid to upper 90s, low 100s
- Winter: 20s-40s

13. Is water available? The area is very dry, and natural water sources are scarce. Perennial lakes and streams do not exist. Springs are limited and scattered mostly along lower elevations. Springs and pipelines have been developed with water troughs for livestock use. All water sources should be treated for human consumption. You should plan to bring all the water you will need during your visit.

14. What about gas and other services? The closest places for fuel, food, beverages, phones, etc. are at gas stations located at either I-80 Exit 70 at Delle or on the Skull Valley Goshute Indian Reservation off Utah Highway 196.

15. Do cell phones work? Cell phones may work intermittently throughout the area, but in general service becomes weaker the farther south from the freeway you travel. Visitors should not rely on a cell phone to get themselves out of trouble. Come prepared for emergencies, and always let someone at home know where you are going and when to expect you back.

16. What about fire restrictions? Fire restrictions often go into effect throughout Utah in the summer months. Prior to your visit, contact the BLM Salt Lake Field Office at 801-977-4300 about current fire restrictions that may affect the Cedar Mountains Wilderness.

You may gather a reasonable amount of dead and down wood for use in a campfire. You must not cut down any free-standing trees, dead or alive. To minimize resource impacts, BLM encourages the use of cooking stoves. If you do make a campfire, be sure to keep it contained at all times, put it dead out and cold to the touch, and scatter your fire ring and ashes before you go.

Beware of thunderstorms and dry lightning in warm weather months. This area has experienced frequent wildfires in the past. Under certain conditions, wildfires may move very rapidly so be watchful and wary. Move away from an area of smoke and/or flames as quickly as possible. ***Report any wildfires immediately to the Northern Utah Interagency Fire Center (NUIFC) at 801-908-2000.***

17. Are there areas I cannot go? Visitors should be aware that the U.S. Army's Dugway Proving Grounds are located along the south and west sides of the Cedar Mountains. Please use the attached Cedar Mountain Wilderness Area interim map to familiarize yourself with the location and avoid straying into this highly restricted military reservation. Because of the proximity of military test and training ranges to the wilderness area, always be on the lookout for unexploded military ordinance. Do not touch or move any suspicious objects you may find. Mark them and move a safe distance away. Immediately contact the Dugway Proving Grounds *Explosive Ordinance Disposal* (EOD) unit at 435-833-2962 if you find any suspicious looking objects.

18. Is livestock grazing permitted in the wilderness? Yes, valid existing rights such as livestock grazing are allowed under the Wilderness Act. However, use of motorized vehicles for herding or gathering livestock is not permitted within the wilderness boundary except by specific permission of the BLM.

19. Is mining permitted in wilderness? Valid existing claims that were previously established and developed in a wilderness area are permitted and closely monitored by the BLM. Prospecting, exploration, or establishment of new claims inside the Cedar Mountains Wilderness is prohibited.